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A Short (View of) some of
The Evils and Grievances,

which at this time oppress

The British Empire,

through

The Corruption of its Government:

And which are utterly contrary to the Spirit

and Precepts of

REASON and CHRISTIANITY.

By **THOMAS BENTLEY**, of Sudbury, in Suffolk

Intended as an Answer to the late Speech of Mr. Justice Ashhurst to the Grand Jury of Middlesex,---And to the misrepresentations, false-assertions, and wicked insinuations, published by a society of RICH men, who met at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, the 20th of this instant November, under a PRETENCE of "preserving liberty and property, and opposing republicans and levellers."

And intended further, to shew the JUST CAUSE the poor have for that discontent, which has for some years past been so visibly increasing amongst them, in this Kingdom.

November, 1792.

THOUSANDS of rich, idle Gentlemen, Merchants, Factors, Farmers, and Tradefmen are allowed to monopolize Lands, Provisions, and Goods of all sorts to what extent, and amount they please ; and to let, or sell them as high as they chuse, without hindrance; whilst thousands of poor, wretched, starving, hungry, hard-working families who are thus **FORCED** to give a *double price* for necessaries, are forbidden under severe penalties and punishments to take proper steps in order to procure an equal advance of wages.

Thousands of sober, industrious, honest men have, whenever the king or the ministry chose, been exceedingly oppressed by the arbitrary, despotic, wicked practice of issuing preps-warrants : some being obliged to secrete themselves, or else live in continual fear, or flee from their habitations ; and others being actually taken and dragged away from their families like felons, to fight for the pleasure and property of many, who when sickness, old age, or misfortunes reduce them to parish-allowance, will not allow them the necessaries of life, common among poor people, or take so much care of them as they do of their horses and dogs.

Thousands of ignorant lads and young-fellows are by lies and liquor, or necessity, seduced to enter into the army upon wicked, oppressive terms; and when afterwards they find the pay insufficient, are tempted to the commission of so many crimes, as make Soldiers, in general, to be reckoned amongst the most worthless and abandoned, instead of being, **AS THEY OUGHT**, companions for the most worthy and honourable men in the community: and instead of being remarkable for virtue and decency and good-behaviour and zeal for God, their Officers seem to think them the best men who are totally destitute of those qualifications; so that our **GREAT** army destroys both the property and the morals of the nation.

Thousands of poor children are continually brought up without the benefit of being taught to read and write; their parents not being able to procure those *necessary* qualifications for them.

Thousands of Men and Women are forced to work for wages which are not sufficient for the supply of reasonable calls, being no more than when provisions were sold at half the present prices.

Thousands of poor are driven or tempted by want of work, low wages, necessity and oppression into the commission of thefts, robberies, and various other crimes, which ultimately bring them to transportation, the gallows, or other severe punishments.*

Thousands of men and women are kept from marrying, and drawn to whoredom, by the certainty of not being able to maintain a family in a decent manner,

Thousands of Parish-Poor are used in a cruel, oppressive, unchristian-like manner, by the Laws, Justices & Parish-Officers of this kingdom, and by the customary rules and allowances of the *generality*, if not the *whole body* of Work-houses.

Thousands of the poorer sort of House-keepers and Tradesmen are greatly oppressed by the present mode of levying the poor-rates, according to rents.

Thousands of poor tradesman, publicans and shopkeepers in various lines, are at their wits end

* Among which we may justly reckon *confinement for debt*; numbers being induc'd to take Credit from a desire to provide for their families, without going to a Work-house; and though mistaken or disappointed in their hopes, are yet perhaps, oftentimes, more honest and industrious and sober than those who imprisoned them.—one wou'd think that the Thousands of Debtors and Criminals in our Jails, and the Thousands of poor

end to get a living; although a *reasonable* reduction of rents and division of lands, wou'd plentifully, easily, and speedily provide for them all.

Thousands are *forced* to pay considerably towards the ENORMOUS salaries of government, who are obliged to maintain their own large families upon twenty or thirty pounds a year.

That Thousands of Gentlemen, Tradesmen, Farmers, and even Servants and Journeymen, have more than enough; is no relief to multitudes who are suffering poverty, hunger, and nakedness.

Thousands of human beings are excluded from existence, and as many deprived of education, by the immense number of horses and carriages unnecessarily kept in this kingdom; which raise living so high, as to deter and exclude many from marriage and education.

Thousands of the best subjects in Britain are as grievously oppressed by the practice of funding, or the *national* debt, as others often are by the wasteful, extravagant conduct of *private* persons.

in the Workhouses and Streets, wou'd be sufficient to contradict the impudent lying boasts of rich, selfish, unfeeling men, concerning the unequal'd, universal happiness and prosperity which they would force us to believe reigns in the nation, contrary to our sight and feelings.

Thousands of poor persons are by the excessive expence and tediousness of our courts of Law, as effectually deprived of justice as if there were no laws at all.

Thousands of men and women, of the same nature and feeling as Kings and Queens, are in this Empire deprived of the rights of human nature, and rendered even more wretched than beasts.

Thousands of Englishmen are greatly hurt, both in Temporal and Spiritual things, by that wicked, antichristian practice of *compelling* tithes, dues, and church-rates.

Thousands of men and women who live and die in the NOTORIOUS violation of the essential and indispensable laws of christianity, are, notwithstanding, admitted to the communion-table of the Church of England, and after death interred by it, in "in sure and certain hope of eternal life!"

The author of this can witness that in the course of fifteen or sixteen years past the King, the Ministers of State, the Bishops, and many members of both Houses of Parliament have been *repeatedly* informed of these and other

other Evils and Grievances ; but they have shut their eyes, and extinguished in their breasts pity and mercy towards the poor, and their hearts, through covetousness and pleasure, are become hard like flint ; and the Clergy vindicate them therein :

Therefore,

From the above facts, and many others of the same nature and tendency, he declares, in the name of the LIVING GOD ! and of his Son Jesus Christ, and of his Holy Spirit, which speaks by the prophets and apostles in the Scriptures,

That the King is not "religious and gracious," but covetous, oppressive and ungodly ; —and if he dies in his present state, where God is he will never come.

In the same true names he also declares,

That the Ministers of State, the Parliament, and the Judges are not [*collectively*] "men fearing God, and hating covetousness, and doing as they would be done by ;" but on the contrary, are in general destitute of the true fear of God, and may be fitly compared to Lions, Tygers, Foxes and Swine.

And by the same authority he further declares,

That the present Church of England is as really a Church of Antichrist as that of Rome is, or ever was ; and that it is the duty of every

every one who seeks the favour of God, and eternal life, both hearers and preachers, to separate themselves from it. And he believes also, that it is now full time for Methodists and Dissenters of all denominations, to refuse all further support to it, by tithes, dues, or church-rates, at whatever risque.

O Lord God of heaven and earth ! Omnipotent, Righteous, and Merciful ! —look upon the oppression, and hearken to the sighs of the poor !—let the sceptre of the wicked be broken in pieces, and the tongues of flatterers be put to silence.—raise up temporal and spiritual help, equal to the great depth of our disorders ;—that “beauty may again appear instead of ashes, the oil of joy be given us, instead of mourning, and the garment of praise cover us, instead of the spirit of heaviness !” and let all who love *mercy and truth* —*righteousness and peace*, say Amen.

What reason have the oppressed to expect that the people in power mean to ease them, while they continually affirm, that the nation NOW possesses an unequalled, universal, sufficient state of prosperity and happiness !—although at this very time perhaps not less than half the nation are forced to live upon the same income, as when most of the necessities of life were to be procured at half the expence : and in some instances where there has been a late advance of wages, it CERTAINLY has not been more than one-fourth of what it ought to have been.—Thousands of men are still labouring for one shilling a day, and single women for six-pence : neither does the remedy seem so eligible by raising wages, and pushing trade, as by LOWERING RENTS and DIVIDING FARMS and COMMONS.

N.B. I am ready to maintain the truth of the assertions contained in this paper, before any Man, or Court, or Assembly in the Nation.

T. B.

